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ENG 3009G-010: Myth and Culture

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English 3009G Section 010
Myth and Culture
Fall 2004

Instructor: Professor Carol Stevens

Office: 3861 Coleman Hall

Office Hours: Wed. 9-12, one-half hour after classes, and by appointment

Telephone and voicemail: 581-6970

E-mail: cfcds@eiu.edu

Textbooks:

Dundes, *Sacred Narrative*

Hesse, *Siddhartha*

Leonard and McClure, *Myth and Knowing*

Llallungpa, *Life of Milarepa* (We'll actually use Eva Van Dam's graphic novel version of this in class, but I hope most of you will read the book)

Menchu, *I, Rigoberta Menchu* (ed. Burgos-Debray, tr. Wright)

Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (tr. Innes)

Tapahonso, *Saanii Dahataal: The Women Are Singing*

Tedlock, *Popol Vuh*

Zolbrod, *Dine bahane*

As well as selected handouts, films, websites, and other materials which will become part of the syllabus.

Course Description:

The catalog describes this course as follows: "Through comparative analysis of myths from selected cultural traditions, the course will examine relationships among mythic, historical, anthropological, and scientific ways of understanding." What this means for us is that we will be reading foundation stories for cultures around the world, and learning as much as we can about how the stories relate to and help us understand the cultures they come from. Some lecture, much small group work, reading, writing, and discussion.

Objectives—to know:

- ◆ what myths are and how they function
- ◆ how to distinguish among kinds of myths, and distinguish myths from legends and folk tales
- ◆ how to understand the stories of some of the world's great cultures
- ◆ how these cultures differ from and are similar to each other and our own
- ◆ how myths affect the practices and beliefs of a culture

With this knowledge, you can:

- ◆ be more conscious of the forces and events that shape cultures and societies
- ◆ be able to speak and write clearly and well about myths and the cultures they represent

- ♦ be able to encounter myths from cultures you have not previously studied and come to some understanding of them on your own
- ♦ have a better understanding of the richness and diversity of cultures
- ♦ recognize references and allusions when you encounter them in literature and art
- ♦ take pleasure and enjoyment from your knowledge

Grades:

Grades will be based on 100 points total, earned as follows—

- ♦ A mid-term (10 points) and a final exam (15 points) for 25 points total
- ♦ Two papers, an analysis of a myth (20 points) and a research paper on a topic to be assigned in class (30 points) for 50 points total
- ♦ A quiz or the equivalent every two weeks (10 points based on an average)
- ♦ Participation, classwork, shorter written exercises, group work, online discussion--15 points total

Attendance, promptness, timeliness:

Attendance is required. So is participation. Class meets once a week, for two and a half hours, so an absence from one class involves missing an entire week's work. If you're not here, you are neither learning nor contributing. Unexcused absence will receive a 2 point deduction the first time, 4 the second and so on. Arriving late will cause a 1-point deduction the first time, 2 the second, and so on, because patterns of absence and tardiness make the work of the rest of the class difficult. Reading and writing assignments are due at the beginning of the class meeting for which they are assigned.

When you participate in online discussion, all postings are due by 5:00 p.m. the day *before* the material is to be discussed in class; if this is impossible for any reason, you must hand in a one-page response to the topic in class. (More about this later.) Since they are intended as preparation for the discussion, it makes no sense to hand them in or do them after the discussion has taken place.

Handing in one of the papers late will result in a 1-point penalty for each day the paper is late. Hand the paper in a week late, and you've gone from, say, 20 possible points to a maximum of 13 before the paper is even graded.

Excused absences will be granted only for reasons outlined in the catalogue.

Schedule:

Stay on it for readings, journals, and other written work.

Paper Format:

Out of class work should be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins, and stapled. No binders, folders, or covers, please. Shorter assignments should have your name, date, and course and section in the upper right-hand corner. Papers

should have titles and headings, identifying them by your name, the course and section number, and the assignment.

Students with Disabilities:

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services at 581-6583.

Academic Honesty:

The English Department's Statement on Plagiarism is as follows: Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work" (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*) has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty up to and including a grade of F for the assigned work and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office. I expect you to do your own work, to use sources properly, to imbed them appropriately into your work, to use paraphrase, summary, and quotation as needed, with careful and correct documentation. This applies not only to books and articles, but to media and electronic sources, including all web and online sources.

Classroom courtesies:

Cell phones, beepers, pagers, and anything else that beeps, buzzes, rings or sings, off for the duration of class, please. No exceptions.

Please note: any policy statement, schedule or syllabus, is by its nature a tentative document. Changes may occur which may alter any of the policies or schedules, including those for grading, at any time. An announcement in class will be considered sufficient notification for such changes.

Online discussion group:

Please activate your student e-mail account immediately if you have not already done so. WebCT will recognize only official EIU e-mail addresses; in addition, you may have difficulty reaching me with individual e-mail if you use anything other than your EIU address, or if you attach anything to your e-mail.

At least four times during the semester you will post to the online discussion group, listed under "Bulletin Boards" on the homepage for the course. There will be a topic, either announced in class or posted on the list, or both. You may post more than four times if you wish, but you must post on at least four different readings. These postings are due no later than 5:00 p.m. the day before a reading assignment is due. For instance, if the *Enuma Elish* is due for discussion in class August 31, the posting is due no later than 5:00 p.m. on August 30.

In your posting, you will do two things: first, discuss the designated topic thoughtfully and substantively. Second, respond to the posting of at least one other member of the class. (This requirement is waived if you are the first person to post on a topic, so it pays to be early.) Your response should be at least one full paragraph. If for ANY reason you cannot post to the list, you must bring a one-page discussion of the topic to class and hand it in before the discussion begins. I will keep track of postings and hand-ins, and assign credit appropriately at the end of the semester.

Do NOT use the discussion list to ask questions about assignments, grading, or class procedures. If you have questions or comments about any of these things, address them to me in a private e-mail written to the e-mail address given on the course handout.

Electronic Writing Portfolio:

English 3009G is a writing-intensive class; a paper from this class may be submitted to your electronic writing portfolio. If you are planning to submit a paper from this class, you will revise the paper once more AFTER it is graded. See me as soon as possible if you are planning to submit a paper from this class.

Paper and exam due dates:

Paper topics will be assigned and discussed in class and in individual conferences.

Paper #1 analysis of a myth – preliminary draft Oct. 5, grading draft Oct. 12

Paper #2 research paper – schedule as follows (all assignments are due in writing at the beginning of the class period for the day on which they are assigned:

Preliminary statement of topic Oct. 19

Tentative thesis statement and one-page progress report Nov. 2

Draft with preliminary list of works consulted in correct MLA format Nov. 9

Grading draft Nov. 16

Mid-term Exam Oct. 12 in class

Final Exam Tuesday Dec. 14, 7:30-9:30 p.m.

Tentative Reading Schedule (readings are due by the beginning of the period on the date indicated):

Aug. 31 In *Sacred Narrative*, William Bascom, "The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives" 5-29; In *Myth and Knowing* Chapter 1 "Purposes and Definitions", 1-28, Chapter 2 "Creation Myths" 32-46 plus "Amma and Nummo Prepare the World" 46-57, "From Chaos to King Zeus, from Hesiod's *Theogony* 63-75; on handout or website, "Enuma Elish" (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/ane/enuma.htm>)

We'll talk in class on Aug. 23 about what to look for in these readings, and what you'll discuss online for next week's class.

(To be continued. . .)